

2009

The Obesity Epidemic and Massachusetts Students



What is the problem?

The 2009 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that among high schools students¹:

Obesity and Overweight

25% were either overweight or obese (11% obese).

Unhealthy Dietary Behaviors

86% ate fewer than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day².

25% reported drinking at least 1 can or glass of soda per day².

64% skipped breakfast on some days².

Physical Inactivity

66% of high school students and **67%** of middle school students did not meet the recommended levels of physical activity (60 minutes per day) on at least 5 days per week².

41% did not attend physical education during an average school week, and **82%** did not have daily physical education.

35% had not been taught how to follow a personal fitness plan in school.

41% had not played on any sports teams in the past 12 months.

66% of high school students and **58%** of middle school students did not walk or bike to school².

30% watched 3 or more hours of television on an average school day. (CDC recommends no more than 2 hours of non-school media time per day.)

30% played video games or used the Internet for non-school activities for 3 or more hours on an average school day.

¹The 2009 MA YRBS is the source of information except where noted. Middle school information is from the 2009 MA Youth Health Survey. ²In the week before the survey.



What are the solutions?

Kids must be healthy to learn, but they must also learn to be healthy.

- High Quality Health and Physical Education
- Healthy Food Choices
- Strong Physical Activity Programs

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What is the status of school health programs?

The 2008 Massachusetts School Health Profiles indicates that among secondary schools (middle & high schools):

Health Education

- 18%** did not require any health education course.
- 21%** did not have a written curriculum for health education, and **36%** did not have plans for how to assess student performance.
- 21%** did not have a lead health education teacher with Massachusetts certification to teach health education.

Physical Education and Physical Activity

- 4%** did not require a physical education course in any grade of the school, and **25%** did not require physical education in all grades.
- 27%** allowed students to be exempted from physical education for participation in sports, other courses, or activities.
- 24%** did not administer a physical fitness test to students in any grade in the past year. Of those that had, **66%** never sent results of fitness tests home to parents, and **71%** never shared aggregate fitness scores with school administration.
- 13%** did not have a written curriculum for physical education, and **15%** did not have plans for how to assess student performance.
- 59%** did not have a policy prohibiting or discouraging the use of physical activity as punishment.

Nutrition Environment

- 43%** allowed the sale of less nutritious foods and beverages (e.g., candy, soda, cookies) outside the school food service program.
- 84%** did not always offer fruits or non-fried vegetables in vending machines, school stores, canteens, snackbars, and during celebrations when foods and beverages were offered.
- 30%** allowed advertising of candy, fast food restaurants, or soft drinks.



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- **Healthy Food Choices**
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